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ABSTRACT

Two checklists intended for directors and aspiring directors identify tasks involved in starting and subsequently operating a day care center. Lists may need to be modified to accommodate state and local regulations, specific community requirements, and individual needs. The "Start-Up Checklist for Day Care Centers" is a list of typical tasks which must be completed prior to the opening of a day care center. The tasks are sequenced in the manner in which they often occur, but may vary according to individual circumstances. The "Operating Checklist for Day Care Centers" lists the ongoing tasks in the day-to-day operation of a day care center. The two checklists are appropriate for either profit or not-for-profit day care centers. (Author/NH)

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Title: Checklists for Starting Up and Operating a Day Care Center

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Checklists for Starting Up and Operating a Day Care Center

Introduction

Anyone who has looked into or actually followed through with starting and operating a day care center is aware that it is a lengthy and seemingly formidable process involving a variety of tasks. Time and again we hear individuals say that if they had known beforehand what was involved in establishing and operating a day care center, they might not have chosen to do so. We also hear people say that if they had had more direction when they began their operations that they could have perhaps avoided many problems. Therefore, we have developed checklists of tasks which are involved in the start up and subsequent operation of a day care center.

The Start-Up Checklist for Day Care Centers is a list of items which are typical tasks which must be completed prior to the initial opening of a day care center. The tasks are sequenced in a manner in which they often occur but of course may vary according to individual circumstances. The Operating Checklist for Day Care Centers includes tasks which are on-going operations of a day care center; therefore, the order in which they occur is of less consequence. The two checklists can be used by those who operate either profit or not-for-profit day care centers.

Start-Up Checklist for Day Care Centers

- ° Begin resource reading on child development, child care, and effective administration.
- ° Contact regulatory agencies including licensing, fire and public health as well as zoning boards for respective regulations.
- ° Contact and visit day care operations in the area to become a part of the professional community as well as to gain information regarding tuition fees, policies, and programs.
- ° Conceptualize your purpose and philosophy concerning child care.
- * ° Identify potential sponsors for not-for-profit child care (eg. church, YMCA, etc.).
- ° Make an appointment with the licensing agent to discuss in detail starting an operation, finding appropriate facilities, planning program objectives, and evaluating your transcript if you intend to be the Director.
- ° Determine the type of organization the center will be: sole-proprietorship, partnership , or incorporation.
- * ° Investigate the Child Care Food Program sponsored by the Department of Agriculture.
- * ° Read your state's latest version of the General Not-For-Profit Corporation Act.
- ° Contact IRS for pertinent materials and forms.
- * ° Obtain Articles of Incorporation for profit corporation and an application for a tax exempt number.
- ° Organize and meet with a group of people who serve as Incorporators and/or Directors for the corporation and who will write the Articles of Incorporation and the By-Laws and determine the name of the organization.
- ° Have an attorney review the Incorporation papers and By-Laws. Have the Incorporation papers notarized and send to the Secretary of State.
- ° Apply for the Child Care Food Program, if applicable.

* Items identified in this manner refer only to not-for-profit day care centers.

Start-Up Checklist Cont.

- ° Investigate eligibility for Title XX funding, apply if eligible.
- ° Examine potential facilities for operation and arrange for licensing agent and possibly a Board member to evaluate sites.
- ° Investigate and make decisions about types of insurance, liability, fire, theft, and employee packages.
- ° Read Public Law 94-142, "Handicapped Children's Act."
- ° Survey potential CPA firms with experience in establishing financial records for child care facilities.
- ° Hold initial Board meeting to present summary of information regarding sites, Identification Resolution, Banking Resolution, final approval of By-Laws, and naming of the Director.
- * ° After you have received your filed copy of the Articles of Incorporation, apply for tax-deductible status under the IRS Code 501 (c) (3).
- ° Arrange for any rennovations at site required by regulatory agencies.
- ° Set up contract files such as insurance, lease, etc.
- ° Investigate your state's requirements for Unemployment Insurance.
- ° Collect information regarding Social Security requirements.
- ° Examine need for fidelity bonds.
- ° Contact various banks for information on checking accounts and select one in which to open an account.
- ° Design a start-up budget as well as a break-even analysis considering fixed and variable costs and fee amounts, also design an operating budget.
- ° Assess equipment/supply needs, and survey costs from different suppliers.
- ° Hold Board meetings as needed to make decisions.
- ° Contact loaning institutions if needed.
- * ° Complete application for the Child Care Food Program.
- ° Begin work on staffing pattern and job descriptions; place advertisements for positions in newspapers.
- ° Begin recruitment of children--design a brochure or information sheet as well as an initial application; make flyers advertising the facility and distribute.

Start-Up Checklist Cont.

- Call licensing agent for permit study.
- Submit orders for equipment and supplies.
- Consider collecting resources for staff development.
- Develop menu cycle.
- Develop application for staff positions, interview questions, and checklists of reference questions; interview and hire persons.
- Discuss with Board the possibility of adding various age components to program.
- Consider the development of an administrative calendar on a monthly basis.
- Begin monthly financial transaction analysis.
- Have outdoor sign designed for facility.
- Consider holding an Open House at the facility and participating in other methods of advertising, attend and speak at group and business meetings for exposure.
- Arrange for food supplier.
- Complete packet of forms needed for enrollment of children.
- Write a Parent Handbook, which will include program philosophy, goals, and policies and procedures.
- Design floor plans and arrange rooms into learning centers as well as design outdoor play area.
- Arrange for in-service training for staff, at which time necessary operation forms may be designed (eg. excursion forms, plan sheets, etc.)
- Review forms and plans with licensing agent, obtain permit.
- Prepare and distribute a news release concerning the opening of the center.
- Purchase final supplies needed prior to opening center.
- Conduct school showings and complete further enrollment.
- Organize final preparations for opening day, including sign-in, sign-out sheets, checking class lists, forms, etc.

Start-Up Checklist Cont.

- Establish regular staff meeting days and times.
- File income verification forms for the Child Care Food Program.
- Double-check staff and children's files for all forms and information prior to opening.

Operating Checklist for Day Care Centers

- Evaluate and schedule daily and weekly tasks that need to be accomplished by the staff.
- Practice emergency procedures with the children.
- Periodically meet with accountant to assure that financial records are in order as well as at the end of the fiscal year.
- Adapt program schedule to the daily needs of the children.
- Evaluate record keeping system and maintain current information.
- Assess usage of time and adapt in the most effective manner.
- Consider a variety of means of communicating with parents, including a newsletter.
- Join professional organizations, workshops and meetings, and when possible make these also available to staff. Continue in-service training.
- Arrange for financial transaction to occur on time in the way of payroll, loan repayment, etc.
- * Maintain current and accurate records for the Child Care Food Program and turn in information and renewals prior to deadlines.
- Weekly, review status of accounts and proceed with actions in regards to late fees, delinquent accounts, etc.
- Evaluate staff and conduct conferences, developing personal and programmatic goals.
- Revise personnel policies as needed.
- Inventory supplies and reorder as necessary.
- Assess building and equipment and identify items in need of repair, lacking, or depleted. Order or repair as needed.
- With staff, plan parent events which may be educational and/or social in nature.

Operating Checklist Cont.

- ° File necessary forms, eg. IRS Form 941, quarterly federal tax withheld, IRS Form 990, and Form 1099, and forms required by the licensing agency.
- ° During in-service training, focus upon policies which address recognizing and reporting child abuse cases.
- ° Recruit, interview and hire new staff as needed.
- ° Investigate the possibility of establishing a volunteer program.
- ° Assess the policies and procedures of the center and revise as needed.
- ° Devise on-going methods of recruitment of children, establishing procedures of handling inquiries.
- ° Develop and write a waiting list policy. Maintain a current waiting list.
- ° Revise operation forms as needed.
- ° Examine various methods of documenting children's progress, and begin implementation.
- ° Plan staff meetings to address programmatic and staff concerns, the growth and development of individual children, and staff development.
- * ° Prepare with a committee of Board members an Annual Report and submit to the Secretary of State's Office.
- ° Organize and periodically review historical records of the facility.
- ° Facilitate the Board in organizing a nominating committee to elect Board members.
- ° Hold parent conferences semi-annually, annually, or as needed.
- ° Conduct parent survey for feedback about center services and programs.
- ° Give staff opportunity to evaluate Director in a nonthreatening manner.
- ° Become acquainted and involved in community service projects.
- ° Conduct financial analysis on a monthly, quarterly, and fiscal year basis.
- ° Keep staff and children's records current.

Operating Checklist Cont.

° Keep resources for staff development and parent education current.

° Evaluate menu cycle and revise as needed.

In summary, the checklists are meant to be used as convenient reference points for start up and operational tasks. Obviously, individuals may need or want to amend the lists to accommodate state and local regulations, specific community requirements, and individual needs. The checklists overall, however, should help directors and aspiring directors to identify the tasks which must be accomplished if their operations are to function smoothly.